

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Mountain-Prairie Region

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MAR 06 2013

The Honorable Michael F. Bennet United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

Thank you for your March 1, 2013, letter requesting an extension of the public comment period for the proposed listing and critical habitat rules for Gunnison sage-grouse. We recognize the importance of information that many of your constituents can provide in the rule making process. We also understand the need for more time to compile information and comments.

As you are aware, the Fish and Wildlife Service is under a tight deadline to complete a final determination by September 30, 2013. This deadline was set as part of the Multi-District Litigation settlement agreement. Therefore, we cannot grant an extension of the comment for the requested 60 days, but we intend to grant a three week extension of the comment period, until April 2, 2013. Also, there will be a second opportunity to comment during the 30 day comment period for the Economic Analysis for proposed critical habitat which is anticipated to occur in May. Comments on all aspects of both rules will be accepted during the second comment period.

We have received several requests for public hearings on the proposed rules. Public hearings will be scheduled during the second public comment period, anticipated to occur in May. We will let you know the time and location of the public hearings as soon as they are scheduled.

We appreciate the valuable information your constituents can provide in our listing decision process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Matt Kales at 303-236-4576.

Sincerely,

क्रिकारें Regional Director